



Developing tomorrow's professionals

November 2015

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Help with Personal Statements! How to be Grad School Ready

1) What kind of personal statements are most common?

The most common types of personal statements we see in the Writing Center are those for medical school applications or law school applications; however, we see a number of personal statements that students are writing as part of their applications for other graduate programs, and these statements play an important part in admissions decisions at every level. The personal statement is often the single most important artifact that an applicant includes in an application portfolio because the statement serves as an individualized narrative that supports other concrete measures of academic and professional performance.

2) What is the best way to begin a personal statement?

There are many ways to begin an effective personal statement, but beginning with an engaging narrative or a comment that clearly highlights individualized experiences is most important. Opening with a brief narrative and clearly articulating your unique identity will differentiate your application from others and will allow you to illustrate how your past personal experiences and present professional goals coincide with the program to which you are applying.

3) What resources are best to look at when trying to draft a personal statement?

At the Writing Center, we recommend

the Purdue OWL (Online Writing Lab) as a resource for writers working on personal statements. There are also a few other resources that we've used in the past, and we've included links to these resources below:

Undergraduate Personal Statement Resource: <http://www.admissions.ucla.edu/prospect/perstmt.htm>

Medical School Personal Statement Resource: <http://web.jhu.edu/prepro/health/Applicants/personal.statement.html>

Law School Personal Statement Resource: <https://careercenter.georgetown.edu/graduate-law-school/law-school-application/law-school-personal-statement>

[statement-tips.html](#)

4) How can you make your personal statement stand out?

The best way to make your personal statement stand out is to answer application questions clearly and concisely and to demonstrate how your personal experiences uniquely qualify you for the program to which you are applying. Your goal in the personal statement is to separate yourself from other applicants and show clearly how your unique set of personal experiences justify your exceptional candidacy for an academic or professional program of study.

5) What are grad schools looking for?

The resources above contain detailed information about what individual schools and programs are looking for, but the rule of thumb is to make sure you are responding directly to the questions on the application. Essentially, graduate schools want to see that you have personally invested

time and energy in writing the personal statement, avoiding overly general claims or generic information. Admissions committee members also want to know that you've taken the time to write a unique personal statement for their individual program, and they are interested in getting to know you as a person outside of other application materials. While you certainly want the strongest possible GPA and standardized test scores as part of your academic portfolio, grad schools want to know more about your identity than the metrics that qualify your candidacy. The personal statement is an opportunity to highlight how personal experiences may compensate for a less than optimal GPA or lower test scores, and this statement gives voice to your overall preparedness for a program of study.

6) Some General Tips!

- Avoid summarizing your resume.

- Don't use cliches or trite expressions, such as "It meant a lot to me" or "I have a passion for..."
- Avoid using the exact same personal statement for every program.
- Write confidently, not arrogantly.
- Demonstrate your personal investment in the program.
- Illustrate the connection between personal experience and future goals.
- Edit carefully for grammar errors and mechanical errors.
- Carefully consider the organization of points in the essay. Do not write more than is required.

Thank you to the Writing Center for providing us with this information! Their main office is located in Lamar and they are open 8am – 9pm Monday-Thursday, 8am-3pm on Fridays, and 3pm-9pm on Sundays.

Julian Gilner and Teach for America

What was your major?

I majored in Psychology as an undergraduate and received a Masters in Higher Education, both from the University of Mississippi.

may not be education majors, business entrepreneurs, folks into classrooms across the country where there are shortages or where they are most needed. Teach For America requires a two year commitment to teach in one of 52 regions across the country. Most notably, Mississippi is one of those regions and why I'm involved in the work. Educational equity is a grave societal ill, especially in Ms. All children deserve to be taught by the best people and deserve the best education possible. Thus, TFA-MS seeks to fill our classrooms with game changers who not only teach, but who desire to be a part of the community in which they live.

healthcare, and educators to fully invest in this fight for education equality.

What resources do you suggest students use from the Career Center?

I would suggest using resume' resources as well as take the EDHD 300 level course to really dive into who you are and how you're trying to get there. As an undergraduate, I took that class under Ms. Toni Avant (Director of Career Center) and it changed the way I approached the next phase of my life.

One final question. Do you need to pass the Praxis?

Yes, to be a qualified teacher in Mississippi, you need to pass both Praxis Exams.

What do you look for in students/what stands out?

We look for students who are not just student leaders, but those individuals who understand that educational equity cannot be solved by just teachers. If it could, teachers would have done so already. It takes policy makers,

How did you end up in this position?

Networking! A friend and colleague of mine has been working on partnering with Teach For America with his organization. He knew I was looking to make a transition and introduced me to my current boss. After we talked, I didn't hear back from them for a while. While preparing to move out of state, he called and offered me the chance to interview as both my passion for education and TFAs mission were aligned.

Tell us about Teach for America

TFA is a non-profit organization designed to place excellent people, who

TEACH FOR AMERICA



Message from the Director

Thank you for taking a few moments to explore our newsletter. Our aim is to provide you with helpful tips and resources that will impact your career search in a positive way. We have planned a number of awesome events throughout the academic year that are designed to help you develop your professional skills and navigate workplace transitions. Please make sure that you register with our office to get up-to-date information on Career Center activities, and plan to start early!

We are very proud of our alumni and your

continuous support of the University. One way to give back is to “reach back” and help bring new Ole Miss talent into your organizations. If you are interested in recruiting currently enrolled students or recent graduates for internships and/or full-time employment, we are happy to assist with your hiring needs. Please contact the Career Center at 662.915.7174 for more information. We’re looking forward to a great year and to serving our students and alumni.

Hotty Toddy!

Toni D. Avant, Director

A big thanks everyone that attended our event with the InternQueen Lauren Berger!



Contact Us!

The Career Center is located in 303 Martindale. We are open from 8am to 5pm Monday through Friday.

To schedule an appointment, you can come to the office or give us a call at (662-915-7174).

Our Job Location and Development service is open from 8:00am to 5:00pm Monday through Friday.

For additional help with recruiting/internships, you can schedule to meet with Christy Wright, our recruiting coordinator! Kaylie Rowell (Recruiting Assistant) and Caitlin Ramage (Internship Coordinator and Graduate Assistant) are also available for assistance.

Did you know?

Alumni, you can still access your Employ-UM account no matter how long ago you graduated!